

Redefining the Love Story in Early Twentieth-Century Spain:
Carmen de Burgos as Woman Writer and Her Depiction of Love in Four Novellas

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Introduction

The beginning of the twentieth-century in Spain offers a plethora of interesting themes and people to research, especially in literature. These years experience a flourishing of literary activity. Miguel de Unamuno, Ramón del Valle Inclán, Antonio Machado, and Juan Ramon Jiménez are just a few examples of the many important writers and poets who emerge during this time period. Other sophisticated writers such as Federico García Lorca and Rafael Alberti continue the modernist trend into the 1920's and 1930's. And what do all of these writers have in common? They all are men. Male authors make a substantial mark on Spanish literature during these early years, but there remains a group that demands more attention: the *women* writers of early twentieth-century Spain.

In a time and country where divorce is illegal, women have limited access to education, and the female's place is undeniably in the home, all women, including female writers, must battle male domination. Compared to the more philosophical and experimental writing emerging from male writers during this time, the majority of women's writing in this period has been viewed generally in the past by scholars as entertaining, but hardly profound.

This attitude though, fortunately began to change around the 1970's. Since then, women's writing has picked up more and more interest from scholars. The critical microscope has finally been turned onto this group; however there is still much work to be done. The "role of women in Spanish society...has too often been neglected by historians and literary critics" (Ugarte 80), and their writing demands as much of the spotlight as they can receive.

Along with this more recent literary analysis and criticism, my investigation centers on researching women writers that break the restrictive stereotype and emerge as accomplished authors who make substantial contributions to understanding women, men, and society through their writing. The two women I have studied in depth during this time period are Carmen de Burgos (teacher, writer, journalist) and Margarita Nelken (writer, journalist, politician). Both women address various female (and male) issues in their fiction and nonfiction such as marriage, divorce, equality, maternity, jealousy, lust, social justice, and working conditions. Nelken utilizes a personal concept of the *esposa-compañera* (wife-friend) to define the relationships between men and women in her short novels *La Trampa de Arenal* and *La aventura de Roma*. In striving to fulfill a “feminist” desire, i.e. attain more respect for women, both male and female characters in these works show the complexities of dealing with a woman who encompasses the modern (friend) and the traditional (wife) Spanish female simultaneously. The female protagonists appear to have crossed the boundary and now securely embody both traditional and modern characteristics. The male characters on the other hand suffer throughout the novels because they are not sure how to deal with this new hybrid woman in their personal relationships and society.

However, Nelken’s path toward being an influential writer (and politician) was prepared by other women writers who came before her, bravely exploring the intricacies of the male-female relationship and the meaning of love in their works in a society that was breaking away from tradition. These tensions suggest the need to extend the focus on the male-female relationship to the works of Carmen de Burgos who, as I stated, was another writer and journalist like Nelken who wrote a little earlier in the century. My basic questions are the following: first, does Burgos utilize a central theme in her analysis

of the relationship between men and women? Second, does Burgos use this theme to connect her various novellas and communicate a unified message? And finally, what is Burgos saying about women, their needs, and desires?

Part I - Life

Burgos' Biography and the Status of Early Twentieth-Century Spanish Women Writers

Blanca Bravo Cela opens her biography of Carmen de Burgos not with an analytical anecdote or friendly welcoming to the reader, but with an evocative sentence by Burgos:

El camino es difícil; nos envuelve la luz ardiente, cegadora, de un sol de llamas; el polvo y la tierra nos impiden el respirar. (13)

This statement captures the essence of Carmen de Burgos perfectly and is an excellent way to introduce the study. Burgos' remark appears in the *Heraldo de Madrid* (13) in September of 1909, referring to the various battles and defeats suffered by the Spanish army in its conflict in Morocco. Like that of the soldiers in the desert, Burgos' road was just as difficult. From her beginnings in a small Andalusian town to her national fame as a journalist and writer, Burgos' road includes everything: bumps, ditches, and shadowy turns, as well as gentle slopes, clearly marked signs, and a little foliage along the way. She walked this path over seventy years ago, but the dust has yet to settle.

Carmen de Burgos Seguí was first and foremost a teacher. Her life was shaped by her passion for education and her early profession as an academic instructor. Born in Almería in 1867 and later living in the small town of Rodalquilar, Burgos enjoyed a comfortable life in a wealthy family. Her father, José de Burgos Cañizares, was a vice

consul to Portugal based in Almería. Along with her mother, Nicasia Seguí Nieto, the parents were wealthy from owning parts of gold mines in Rodalquilar. Carmen's mother, who was just fifteen years old when she had Carmen, later gave birth to nine more children, making Carmen the oldest of her siblings. Although the family thought that the first child would be a boy, Carmen was not punished intellectually during her childhood for being female. Books, newspapers, and articles were frequently found on the tables in the house (Cela 20) as the family presumably discussed and debated the country's latest news.

This freedom to read, learn, and debate undoubtedly bolstered Burgos' confidence in a society that held rather strict expectations and views of women. Maria A. Zanetta provides a closer look into the status of women during this time period in her upcoming book *La otra cara de la vanguardia: estudio comparativo de la obra artística de Maruja Mallo, Ángeles Santos, y Remedios Varo*. Zanetta's book focuses on three women painters in the avant-guard era: Maruja Mallo, Ángeles Santos, and Remedios Varo. Yet, her information about women's place in society during this time is very applicable to women *writers* as well. In the beginning of the twentieth-century, feminism, or perhaps more accurately, "pre-feminism" (Zanetta 8) experienced great growth in European countries and the United States. Women were becoming more involved in the public sector. The First World War functioned much like a great equalizer, paradoxically creating something positive and hopeful: more opportunities for women to work in society and not just in the home. Men were away fighting the war, and women stayed behind to take over the jobs and duties left behind: factory workers, administrative positions, and jobs in public businesses. Women could now participate *actively* in making history and influencing society, a role that had been previously reserved for men

only (Zanetta 8). According to Zanetta, during “los terribles años de 1914 a 1918 las mujeres no tenían nada que perder y mucho que ganar” (8).

Yet, this plethora of opportunity did not last long. Eventually the men returned home. Handling the post-war effects had sort of a reverse impact on women and the power they had achieved. Zanetta illustrates that

[l]a pérdida de vidas humanas y la necesidad de volver a poblar el continente se convierten en los motores de una campaña destinada a devolver a la mujer a la feminidad perdida y su papel de madre y ama de casa (9).

Thus, there was a cry for traditionalism, familiarity, and a return to the norm that was so shattered by the Great War. The appropriate definition and manifestation of “femininity” soon went back to being “motherhood” and “creating a comfortable home.” Yearning for the past and security is an understandable response to war. However, many countries soon defined that “security” as pushing women to subscribe to a troublesome dual identity: they could be respected if they were smart and capable, but only within the boundaries of the domestic sphere. However, this limited “respect” for women and their capabilities in the home was not respect at all. It actually had a stifling effect on women and sometimes progressed to outward misogyny.

Interestingly, this misogyny appeared in Spain as well, even though the country had not participated in the First World War. Zanetta affirms that a great “ola de misoginia” (10) began to crash on and flood Spanish societal thought. Scientists, writers, doctors, philosophers, and many others got swept up in the debate over proving “‘científicamente’ la incapacidad e innata inferioridad femenina para desempeñarse en las esferas tradicionalmente masculinas” (Zanetta 10). People were seeking a justification for preserving the traditional female and excluding her from the presumably “male”

activities. The famous philosopher José Ortega y Gasset was particularly open with his views on women. He wrote about female inferiority frequently in his magazine *Revista de Occidente*. Zanetta includes a quotation in her book that outlines his position on the topic:

En la presencia de la Mujer presentimos los varones inmediatamente una criatura que, sobre el nivel perteneciente a la humanidad, es de un rango vital algo inferior al nuestro. No existe ningún otro ser que posea esta doble contradicción: ser humano y serlo menos que el varón (Zanetta 13).

I also suggest that the “double contradiction” that Ortega y Gasset refers to can be understood in another way. This explicit effort to downplay a woman’s abilities in Spain during this time was paralleled with the assertion of her moral superiority. Mothers were not needed in the workforce, but in the home. They were responsible for doing what was right and passing that education on to the children. Thus, women were respected, but only in the way one would perhaps respect a beautiful bird on a pedestal: delicate, knowledgeable in some areas, and even needed, but never expected to fly through the window and explore new lands.

In discussing Burgos, Maryellen Bieder also highlights the problems women writers faced in Spain. Burgos studied hard to become a teacher “in an era when few Spanish women received much formal education and even fewer had any professional training” (Bieder 241). Feminism simply did not experience the same flourishing in Spain as it did in other European countries. The word had negative connotations. “Feminism” was used to label “almost every proposed change in or challenge to the rigidly traditional roles” (Bieder 242) women were expected to fulfill.

Yet, taking these tensions into consideration, it would be incorrect to assert that Spain was *completely* void of any feminist movement. Michael Ugarte states in his book *Madrid 1900: The Capital as Cradle of Literature and Culture* that women writers and their feminist messages “were not invisible, nor is it the case that the difficult conditions for women in the city were accepted without the slightest quarrel” (79). He highlights Emilia Pardo Bazán and Carmen de Burgos and the struggles they faced as female writers in early twentieth-century Madrid. Pardo Bazán is probably the most well-known female writer of this era. As a supporter of women’s rights, she advocated better education for women in her stories and journalistic texts. She cites the “backwardness” (Ugarte 83) of education for females during this time in Spain and how it had not a liberating, but confining effect on women. Furthermore, she became the first woman professor at the University of Madrid in 1916 even though her classes were boycotted by those who believed in male domination of higher education. She faced obstacles, but did not let them completely mute her voice and ideas.

Burgos was not a university professor, but she was one of the first women to earn a living by writing popular novellas and newspaper articles. In other words, she was one of the first female “writers by profession.” Ugarte elaborates on two of Burgos’ fictional works: *El hombre negro* (1912) and *Artículo 438* (1921). The first alludes to divorce, which was illegal at the time, by emphasizing the tensions and difficulties involved when women do not want to remain with their husbands. Furthermore, the second story, *Artículo 438*, deals with another Spanish law. This article allowed for lenient penalties when a man discovered his wife’s adulterous actions. He could kill his wife, the lover, or harm them both, and only be exiled. However, if a woman found her husband cheating on her and killed/hurt him, she could be sentenced to life in prison. Burgos sets up an

almost identical situation with Maria and Alfredo in her story. Alfredo throws his young wife out of the house (without a divorce), yet later kills her when he finds her with her lover Jaime. Alfredo is not sentenced in court and gains full possession of Maria's property.

Burgos' plot lines here undoubtedly express the frustrations she and other women felt toward the blatant legal inequities they were forced to accept. However, these examples also point to perhaps one of the largest criticisms of Spain's early twentieth-century women's writing. Since many women during this time period wrote a lot of sentimental/romantic novels, essays, pamphlets, and "self-help" guides, these texts have been regarded as superficial and lacking complexity. Burgos' concentration on political issues also falls into this so-called "inferior" category. The setting, plot, and characters in *Artículo 438* are interesting; however the main message about legal inequities immediately shines through. The text thus splits into two layers. The political part is the foundation, with the literary creation being a top layer to enjoy but ultimately disregard. Of course, all good stories have different levels to analyze. With Burgos though, sometimes it is relatively easy to understand the purpose and construction of her texts.

I therefore agree that in some cases, her works do not call for heavy and sophisticated analysis. However, the key word here is *some*. Just because this viewpoint applies to a portion of her work does not mean that it should be extended generally to all of her texts and value as a writer. I will show later on in this investigation that Burgos tackles complicated themes in her novellas: consistently producing texts that insist on the focused inquisition of love and women.

In summary, it appears incorrect to suggest that women writers and their works were unique exceptions, people and texts that miraculously overcame the obstacles set

before them by society. Women and their professional abilities were not highly regarded by the average man, the public, and the scholarly community. Yet, the energy for change was there. Female writers, their stories, and feminist messages were gaining more power and respect. Pardo Bazán spoke out quite forcefully about the inequalities women faced, and Burgos purposely intertwined some of her stories with heavy political undertones. Women as writers and members of society were not starting at rock bottom; however there was still a long way to go.

Thus, with the societal and sometimes “scientific” barriers dictating what women could and could not do, every breakthrough by a woman writer needs to be analyzed and celebrated. Burgos lived and became a writer in an ambiguous time for women to assert themselves, but she found a way.

Returning to more biographical information, one of Burgos’ first big steps in asserting herself and her desires was marrying the journalist Arturo Álvarez Bustos against her family’s wishes in 1883. Unfortunately, Burgos soon realized that the marriage was not good. Her husband believed in the traditional female values mentioned earlier, especially in regards to the acceptable duties of a woman: managing the home and kitchen and always honoring the husband and children. In starting to frame Burgos as a woman who broke some societal boundaries, I also need to confirm that Burgos actually did accept the mother role (Cela 39). Her literary work and speeches later on in her life express that the mother was very essential to the success of a family. A mother’s responsibility was to pass down knowledge to her children and therefore create a new educated generation, ready to improve society. What Burgos did not agree to, however, was her husband’s idea of the woman constantly honoring her mate in such a way as to

place her permanently in second place: inferior with no drive to accomplish anything for herself.

Burgos' love of children and her desire to be a mother, though, were not paralleled with fruitful child-bearing. She gave birth to her first son Arturo in 1890, but he died soon after. Then, in 1891, Burgos gave birth to her first daughter, Maria del Mar. She too passed away. Her third child Arturo, born in 1893, died about a year later. Through these pregnancies Burgos also suffered two miscarriages. It was a stark contrast to her parents who had successfully created and seen ten children grow to adulthood. This pain of losing children added to her overall unhappiness with her marriage. Some joy finally came, however, with the birth of her fourth child in 1895: María de los Dolores Ramona Isabel Álvarez de Burgos. With this birth, Carmen could now embrace her identity as a mother and look forward to raising her daughter from a young girl to an educated and independent Spanish woman. The family bonds between Burgos, Arturo, and little María however, did not last long.

Burgos left her husband in 1899 and took her four year old daughter with her. They lived with Burgos' parents in Almería before going to Madrid a year later with Burgos' sister, Catalina. Burgos' had actually started studying to become a *maestra* after the death of her third child in 1894. She soon went to Madrid with her daughter and sister to secure a job in the capital's Escuela Normal. Burgos taught many subjects, including geography, grammar, and history in Madrid, Guadalajara, and Toledo. In her biography, Cela describes these early teaching jobs like being on the brink or frontier of something greater. Burgos arrived every day at class to teach “con el ímpetu y el bullicio de la luchadora ferviente” (40). Her passion, though, clashed with “la rutina silenciosa y la disciplina de la docencia” (40); the traditional way of thinking about and approaching

education was perpetuated by other teachers in an institutional bureaucracy that could not be changed.

Burgos fortunately had another outlet for her ideas and opinions. Her desire to teach during this time was also accompanied by her first literary publications. Her compilation of essays, stories, and ballads in *Ensayos literarios* appeared in Almería in 1900, and more works soon followed in magazines and newspapers such as the *Madrid Cómico*, *El Diario Universal*, *El Heraldo de Madrid*, and *El Cuento Semanal*. Editors granted her space to write her own columns, and her famous pseudonym *Colombine* was created in 1904.

Burgos made her most well-known political and social impact with a work that appeared in 1904. Her book *El divorcio en España* is organized by a basic premise: asking fellow writers, philosophers, scholars, and even the general public about their opinions on divorce. Many of the letters appear in her newspaper columns, and she collects them all in this book. The idea for the book was born “casualmente” (introduction *Divorcio*) when she happened upon a letter from a friend urging her to form a “‘Club de matrimonios mal avenidos’” (Club of Unhappily Married Couples). Burgos believes that divorce should be legalized, because many women (and men) are unhappy in marriage. Why does the law require that people suffer? In Burgos’ mind,

[e]l divorcio es una de las muchas cuestiones sociales que necesitan ser discutidas sin miedo al ‘anathema sit’ [that he or she be accursed/excommunicated]

(introduction *Divorcio*).

The book definitely encourages discussion, because it portrays both sides of the issue. Burgos does not just highlight those who write in favor of divorce, but also includes the opinions of the opponents.

For example, a man named Fernando Araujo offers his opinion on why he is strongly opposed to divorce in Spain and everywhere else. He states that in Spain, “con nuestra idiosincrasia impresionista y nuestro temperamento meridional” (10), allowing divorce would be “un mal gravísimo de incalculable trascendencia” (10). He focuses on love and cites a verse which claims love’s permanency. Death can never kill love, therefore the man should always revere in his heart love and its memory (11). Thus, Araujo is not advocating a blind denouncement of divorce just because it breaks the rules. Rather, he is affirming the importance of love in a relationship and probably suggesting that men and women should really make sure they love each other before agreeing to get married. If everyone put this much thought and consideration into marriage, divorce would not be an issue. All couples would enter their union secure and prepared. Those who do not make sure they love each other before marriage should be blamed for their egotism and ignorance. Araujo’s argument against divorce presents an ideal and admirable way for men and woman to approach marriage, yet he leaves no room for human nature to emerge. If a man and woman change their minds after a few married months, finally understand their naiveté, or simply fall out of love for unexplainable reasons, Araujo demands that they stay in this state; divorce is not an option, because they should have planned more efficiently.

On the other hand, the Spanish novelist Pío Baroja shares a more accepting opinion on divorce.

Soy partidario de él porque creo que hay que afirmar que todo es revocable, que nada es definitivo, que todo puede transformarse y mejorar (12).

Furthermore, he calls attention to the relative notion of “scandal:”

Escandalizar es algo. Cuando la moral es absurda, el escándalo puede ser una forma de la buena moral (13).

In other words, those who defend a ban on divorce and proclaim its moral value are actually upholding an absurd law, a law which perpetuates suffering and leaves no room for freedom. Therefore, challenging Spain's divorce law becomes the "good" and "right" moral. The government's insistence on forbidding married men and women to separate emerges as the ultimate scandal.

Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, another Spanish novelist and close friend of Burgos, agrees with divorce as well. His letter in the book is short; however it reveals a key observation of love, marriage, and its relationship to society. He is a "partidario decidido del divorcio" (13) for a simply stated reason. He believes in "el amor y no en el matrimonio" (13). Priests and judges and what they do to create and verify a marriage are all social conventions. They are "invenciones humanas" (14) that were established to organize and control society. For Ibáñez, love is what defines the "asociación" between a man and a woman. If it fades, then they should not be forced to stay together. He also defends divorce by portraying men and women who want to separate positively. Couples who want to get a divorce are not irresponsible, immoral, or driven by frivolous emotions. Rather, they are often "séres sanos y fuertes" who deserve the right to end their marriage without pain and move on to new lives.

There are many other letters in this book showing both the pro and con sides of the divorce issue. However, I believe that three examples are sufficient to illustrate first, Burgos as an intelligent writer aware of controversial social debates, and second, the respect and value she has gained from fellow writers and readers. Ibáñez, Baroja, and Unamuno (whom I did not cite, but whose letter also appears in the book) would not be

spending their time writing to a journalist who they do not believe to be worthy of organizing this “poll” on an important social concern. Burgos points to a situation in Spain which affects countless men and women, and successfully makes the intellectual input a part of the discussion as well.

Thus, in reference to Burgos’ literary and teaching activities overall, she is trapped by established practices in her teaching jobs, yet gains freedom with her frequent columns and focus on social problems. I suggest that this tension between her academic life and journalism ultimately forces Burgos to look beyond her present status, always envisioning the positive futures of education, women, and her country. The roadblocks, though, are essential in shaping this woman. Without them, maybe Burgos would not have been forced to see some of the problems in Spain. She begins to be heard as Carmen and *Colombine* eventually find a way to exist and spread ideas simultaneously.

Part II - Love

Rougemont’s Love: A Guide to Understanding Burgos?

I explained previously that many of Burgos’ works deal with political issues, and that this subject explains a general regard for her writing as straightforward, practical, and relatively simple. However, following my research on Burgos’ life, her works, and societal influences, another main issue that stands out about her writing is that the complicated theme of love is also central to her work. “Love” is a charged word representing many situations. Countless images scream love as their headline: two people sneaking away at night for moon-lit walks, engagement rings, passionate kisses, Cupid’s arrows, sacrificing work and money to spend time together, soul mates, and creating children. Yet, love also brings to mind broken hearts, fights, betrayal, cheating,

confusion, and heartache. It is an essential element in human relationships. Therefore, in describing male-female relationships, Burgos utilizes a well-known issue. However, when asked to give a definition of love, many people are baffled and cannot provide an exact answer. How can something be so commonly acknowledged and elusive at the same time? Does love have more than one definition?

The French philosopher Denis de Rougemont offers some answers. He centers his book *Love in the Western World* on love and the confusion it has created in society. He discusses the interesting relationships between love, passion, romance, and marriage. Beginning with the twelfth-century Tristan and Iseult story, Rougemont tracks the early notions of passion and love to modern day through Christianity, mysticism, literature, war, and the media. He identifies Western society's biggest problem with love as the great "myth." This myth is basically that *passion* has become mistakenly related to and favored over *love*. The fundamental "true love" that we all probably seek in life – a love "which seeks the welfare of the Other, designates the supreme end, [and] the fulfillment of the whole person in the act of giving (Rougemont 6)" – has become contaminated and veiled. A preference for passion on the other hand,

is manifested in the majority of novels and films...[It] operates wherever passion is dreamed of as an ideal instead of being feared like a malignant fever; wherever its fatal character is welcomed, invoked, or imagined as a magnificent and desirable disaster instead of as simply a disaster (24).

In relationships, or dreaming about a future relationship, people in the Western world have become accustomed to yearning for passion. Yet, "passionate love is a misfortune" (Rougemont 16). Tristan and Iseult, Romeo and Juliet, and any other movie or book that

advertises a *passionate* love story ultimately centers on death, pain, suffering, and unhappiness.

Passion represents being in love with the idea of love. It is all consuming and destructive. So why are people still attracted to it? As Rougemont explains, we have wanted to preserve passion and we cherish the unhappiness that it brings with it; and yet at the same time both passion and unhappiness have stood condemned in the sight of official morals and in the sight of reason (21).

There is an “obscurity” (21). People desire the thrill of destructive passion, yet society and social order have connected it with taboos such as adultery. There is desire, and punishment for the desire. Thus, these opposite forces actually place people in an uncertain position. The confusion allows for a perpetual state of psychological disequilibrium that blinds people to the fundamental contradiction and ignites a desire for the forbidden. People, therefore, will continue to experience an interest for passion, receive condemnations from society, yet still persist in mistakenly equating it with a more exciting and preferable love.

This reasoning also explains why passion is incompatible with marriage. Marriage is something created by society and religion in order to control people and in essence, control the meaning of love. In contrast, passion knows no boundaries. It is not governed by rules, but rather flourishes with a loss of control. Thus, divorce, fights, and general unhappiness in marriage are common when one member of the couple expected passion and does not experience it, or feels it slipping away. Uncertainties about the definition and nature of love also come into play here. What happened to our love, were we ever in love, can I still love my spouse but desire an affair? and so on.

In summary, Rougemont first declares that love is undeniably connected with *confusion*, confusion that arises from dualities, contradictions, and multifaceted identities. Love can be applied to many situations, so how does someone give a single definition? Rougemont approaches this uncertainty by arguing that the original, fundamental love has been buried under the weight of the passion myth. Maybe there is not a single, absolute meaning of love. However, something quite close to a definition of true love has been covered metaphorically and we must dig through the distractions and bring it to light again. Second, these distractions, and consequently unhappiness in love, are often the product of an individual's faulty psyche. Although not absolutely asserting the usefulness of "complete self-awareness" (26), Rougemont claims that Westerners "are destined to become more and more aware of the illusions" (26) they have for love.

In conclusion, this summary provides an overview of Rougemont's arguments for his book and also a framework that will be used later on to answer the following question: does Burgos' approach to love – an approach which ultimately advocates the strength, independence, and freedom of the modern Spanish woman – compare or contrast with Rougemont's? If the argument she is making about love in her stories is compatible with Rougemont's ideas, this similarity suggests that overall, Burgos too advocates possibility and hope for failed love in the world. In other words, the ability "to fix" someone's destroyed path toward love exists. Rougemont argues that in order to really achieve love with another, people need to recognize the distinction between love and passion and not be fooled by seductive illusions. What, then, does Burgos identify as the problem, and a possible solution? As I stated before, these questions will be addressed in the end following a more detailed investigation of Burgos' treatment of love in her novellas.

Burgos' Love in Four Novellas: A Varied Depiction

I will organize the rest of my thesis in the following manner. First, I am going to analyze in specific cases the way Burgos represents love in each of her stories. The examples are not described in any particular order. Rather, I chose a sample of diverse moments from the texts simply to illustrate the variety. Then, I will move on to discuss how Burgos portrays in more detail the tensions the individual female protagonist feels with her “self” as she deals with love. Love ultimately affects the way the women regard themselves and influences their decisions. Finally, I will conclude my investigation by showing how Burgos’ concentration on women, the “self,” and love ultimately reveals a message about female self-esteem and how it is necessary in forming a relationship with a man.

The different treatments of love in the novellas *En la guerra* (1909), *El perseguidor* (1917), *El permissionario* (1917), and *La Flor de la Playa* (1920) are appropriate to analyze for the following reasons. First, except for *El perseguidor*, each story deals with an apparent relationship between a man and a woman. *El perseguidor* is a little different because the woman’s husband dies, and she travels alone for most of the text. Yet, she thinks a man is following her. Also, she decides to end up in the arms of one of her male friends. Therefore, although she is dealing with arguably three men, her relations with each occur in stages: beginning/husband, middle/stalker, end/boyfriend. Each section can still be analyzed as *a* woman dealing with *a* man. Also, love can be analyzed by simply looking at the overall way she views love with a man.

Second, love appears heavily in all four stories. Love emerges textually (written), thematically, and even philosophically. The word “amor” is sprinkled throughout the dialogue and descriptive paragraphs. Individual characters say it, as well as the third

person narrator. Seeing the characters coming together, being separated, and even experiencing both paths ultimately forces the reader to judge whether the couple is in love, and then further make the jump to the question, “wait, what is love anyway?”

Finally, these novellas are organized chronologically according to when Burgos wrote them. The writing dates between *En la Guerra* and *La Flor de la Playa* span eleven years (1909-1920). Therefore, a logical way to analyze Burgos’ different treatments of love is already established. All that is required is to start at the beginning and observe love’s fluctuations throughout the journey: from the African desert, to traveling Europe, to France, and ending in Portugal.

In *En la Guerra*, Burgos utilizes a detailed description of the female protagonist, Alina, against an ongoing war backdrop to define love as caring for another person. Alina, the wife of Spanish military commander Luis Ramírez, has accompanied her husband to the war front in Melilla. When asked if she is afraid, she replies that she is not. The only thing that scares her is blood and the “dolor de los que pierden seres queridos” (170). She is a kind woman, and her tenderness “es como la irradiación del amor de todas las madres” and lovers (170). Alina cannot bear the thought of soldiers dying when they are loved by family and friends (170). Furthermore, she addresses love in the context of *all* the mothers and lovers that have soldiers in the army and eagerly wait for news from the front lines. Thus, Burgos employs her character Alina here as a mouthpiece for a broad yet easily understandable definition of love: someone caring about another person and feeling pain when they die.

Defining love as caring is reinforced even more by Alina’s character sketch. This woman is not related to the soldiers. Nor is she related to her and her husband’s friend Gonzalo. He announces that he does not have a wife or parents or a girlfriend. There is

no one back home loving him, writing to him, and wishing him a safe return. Not surprisingly, Alina quickly offers herself and her husband, declaring that “Luis y yo le amaremos mucho” (170). This generous and touching comment fits perfectly with Alina’s opinions and values as a character. She recognizes the love felt by all the soldiers’ families and consequently loves the overall idea of caring for someone.

Thus, this portrayal of love in Burgos’ novella is pleasantly simple. Family ties and blood bonds are not always needed. Gonzalo is a soldier lacking something, and Alina can provide it. What is needed is simply one human being caring for the well-being and outcome of another: love in perhaps its purest form.

Burgos’ analysis of love continues in her next story, *El perseguidor*. Matilde, a recent widow, decides to leave Spain and travel around Europe alone. She becomes bored living in Madrid and soon “se despertó en ella el amor a los viajes de un modo avasallador” (279). She has traveled the same roads many times, and it ironically gives her “el deseo de las desconocidas” (279), varied lands, and new scenes. This passage touches on a type of love: a positive, “waking up” experience which involves becoming aware of something exciting to do, something that will subdue her tensions and boredom. Quite simply, Matilde’s *amor* represents a strong attraction to an activity, a yearning; an “afición” (279) that she realizes has resided inside of her since childhood.

Since she is alone most of the story, it is tempting to analyze her love of travel as *the* love in her life. Travel could function much like another person; Matilde turns to it when she feels stressed, she enjoys it, and it excites her. Yet, this type of love ultimately does not refer to feelings experienced between two people. There is no relationship between her and the abstract notion of traveling. Concentrating on the love experiences between a man and a woman is the main focus of this thesis. Interestingly though, this

passage should not be brushed aside, because it does point toward her feelings about the love she had in her marriage, and the possible love she could have with her friend, Daniel.

Burgos constructs Matilde's love of travel so that it actually highlights her overall understanding of love as stagnation. These themes seem at first un-relatable. Love usually means something positive, like in Alina's case, caring about another person. Stagnation connotes being stuck and the absence of growth. Yet, Burgos introduces an important cause and effect plot that shows that with Matilde, love and stagnation really do go together.

Matilde marries her first husband, but is only a wife for a few months. Her husband dies, and she becomes a widow. One could expect this female protagonist to mourn the loss of her husband, or, like in some love stories, she could be happy about her husband's death. She is now free to search for another man, possibly one that she really loves. Matilde, though, does not follow this path.

She likes life better without a man. All through the story, she makes references to fighting against stagnation and permanency. In her efforts to avoid living "una vida de molusco" (294), she chooses "otra vida superior" (279): a life full of traveling. This activity gives her the most liberty possible.

She smiles, "con una sonrisa burlona" (279), at those Spanish women who choose to live their lives "en la mediocridad y la monotonía" (279) of love. Some suggest to her that love is what makes life possible.

Cuando nos inutilizamos para el amor, no nos queda más que esperar la muerte al lado de la chimenea, rezando el rosario o tomando pectorales (279).

For society, then, not loving is the equivalent of waiting for death. For Matilde, though, it is the exact opposite. Love, and the marriage that ensues, is what keeps the woman tied down and trapped. She has the desire “de no estar sujeta a nada” (279), meaning most importantly, to be free from a dominating man.

There are moments where Matilde seems capable of understanding love as something good that she would like to experience. She wants to have an “amor hacia todo” which involves having an interest in everything and being moved by the beauty she sees when she stands in front of a monument or painting (279). Also, she is plagued by a shadowy man (el perseguidor) who follows her throughout her travels. When she receives a card from a detective that she thinks might save her from her stalker, she begins to imagine a man that will be her protector: “quién sería aquel hombre que estaba a punto de amar?” (298). Thus, Matilde is not inept at acknowledging and feeling love as a positive. She even states in the end that her fight “contra el amor” (307) is in vain and agrees to let her friend Daniel into her life. Yet, for the majority of the novella, Burgos clearly demonstrates that Matilde’s view of love is negative. For her it represents an inert existence filled only with boredom, containment, and defeat: definitely things to run away from and fear.

Burgos’ next novella, *El Permisionario*, highlights a married couple who find themselves comparing the status of the marriage: past and present. Eventually they come to a realization that brings them closer. The definition of love here is the positive counterpart to the definition described in *El Perseguidor*; Matilde regards love and its permanency as stagnation, whereas here it is expressed more as devotion and loyalty.

The novella opens with the narrator describing Nice, France, as a love oasis. The city is “una verdadera cita de novios, de enamorados” (367) that come to enjoy its sweet

ambience. Burgos' introduction brings love right to the forefront and lets the reader know that it will be a central issue for her characters. Luis and Fernanda are young, recently married, but have not seen each other for months. They are in France to meet and have a little vacation while Luis is on leave from his military duties.

As a young wife left alone so early in her marriage, Fernanda “se quedó sola y lloró mucho (367) when Luis left. She yearns to see Luis again and achieve the “compenetración completa” (367) that characterizes a passionate couple. Their brief time together as man and wife did not allow them to fully understand their relationship and “unite” in all aspects: mentally, spiritually, and physically. While reflecting on their marriage up until the trip to Nice, she concludes that she loved her husband “con un amor tranquilo, reposado, seguro...” (400). These words – tranquil, calm, and certain – support her feelings of love as devotion and loyalty. She did not question their relationship or doubt its sustainability. Nor was she unfaithful to her husband. There are no details suggesting that Fernanda slept with other men, or even indications that she wanted to. Moreover, Fernanda does not criticize her husband for being in the war and consequently leaving her. She places more emphasis on criticizing the horrors of the war, that “maldita guerra que manchaba de sangre las manos de todos los hombres” (369). Her love for Luis is something fixed and dependable, just what devotion and loyalty require. Thus, just describing Fernanda in Nice longing to see her husband already suggests from the beginning that Fernanda is committed to their relationship. Her devotion to him, her “amor seguro”, is what drives her and allows her to hold on in the struggle to make them a more complete and connected couple.

This view of love, though, begins to change once the couple spends a few days together in the company of their friends. Echoing back to Matilde's “waking up” in *El*

perseguidor, Fernanda tells her husband that she has woken up to a new love (400). It is something fiercer and more fervent, much different from the loyal love discussed in the previous paragraph. Fernanda decides that her past love, a love of calm devotion, was not true love after all:

Era ahora, al volverlo a ver, cuando ella se empezaba a enamorar verdaderamente de su marido. Se le parecía otro, distinto de lo que había sido; más hombre, más fuerte, más interesante. Aquel aroma de peligro, aquella decisión del que ha jugado con la muerte le prestaban un encanto, un prestigio nuevo... Sentía un amor vehemente... (397).

Thus, Fernanda's new feelings of love originate from seeing the re-masculinization of her husband combined with the recognition of the impending death that surrounds them. In short, their love is now defined as passion, a sexual passion fueled by the desire to reach eternity.

This passion is based on finally seeing each other in a new way, physically and spiritually. Fernanda tells her husband that she cannot take it anymore. She loves him differently now, and cannot live without him. Luis returns the look toward Fernanda, and notices that something "la iluminaba, la transfiguraba, estaba más bella que lo había estado nunca" (400). She is not dressed to go out, probably in her bathrobe, with "los ojos húmedos y los párpados encendidos" (399) from crying. Fernanda in this moment is plain, unadorned, and natural, yet more beautiful than ever before. Luis observes the "breve tela blanca" that she is wearing, her "cuerpo ligero," "la cabellera negra," and her "ojos brillantes" (400). She also has "labios húmedos," full of passion and life. Thus, the focus is on the body and its possibilities. Fernanda's flesh becomes a place of pleasure, renewal, and safety. He takes her

en sus brazos con pasión frenética y como frente a un abismo comenzó a besarla en un transporte desconocido. Era allí, allí donde podía hallar todo su placer, todo su desbordamiento de vida, todo lo que necesitaba para quemarse y consumirse (400).

The “abismo” that Luis fears is the impending death that surrounds him, something that can take him to an unknown place where he sees nothing, feels nothing, and knows nothing about his wife and the possible men who want to have her.

Their friends look for them in the hotel, but the couple shuts themselves in their room, trying to savor every fleeting moment they have left together. Although Burgos never writes that they make love, the passages which describe Luis and Fernanda as “fuertes en su pasión” (403), the focus on her body, and how they “se abrazan de nuevo frenéticamente” (404) various times, are enough to get the point across: they are having sex frequently and eagerly. Luis says to himself that he does not want to “perder la eternidad que había ganado en ella (406). Also, she is the only place where he can “sobrepasare y sobrevivirse” (406). Thus, when Luis tells his wife that “no nos hemos amado hasta ahora” (401), his remarks are a clear indication that their love has changed and acquired a totally different definition. They realize that they have to create and make up for all the love that should have filled their lives (403), and sex becomes the crucial element for their relationship. Their mutual realization is such an exhilarating experience for the body and soul; it takes them to some higher level of existence, a level that goes on forever in all directions. Their final love, therefore, so sexual and transcendent in nature, becomes the outlet and the medium for attaining what they feel is eternity.

Elisa and Enrique in *La Flor de la Playa* must deal with love as well. They are a couple who has been together for three years, and they decide to take a trip to Portugal.

Not surprisingly, in the opening paragraphs, the word *amor* becomes a focal point for describing the pair. Elisa has a roommate, and Burgos indicates that “el amor de Enrique las había separado mucho” (311). Thus, the reader knows early on that Elisa and Enrique spend a lot of time together, so much time in fact, that the roommate Remedios feels the pain of her friend’s absence. Remedios, though, seems to be an understanding person. She

no se había quejado del cambio; estaba llena de tolerancia para aquel amor que ocupaba toda la vida de su amiga. Elisa y Enrique se amaban cada vez más, con mayor entusiasmo y mayor ilusión (312).

Again, Burgos indicates that the relationship between Elisa and Enrique is powerful. Their love seems to be growing, and they are excited about being together. Their love actually takes over Elisa’s life. This couple is not portrayed so much as two people, but rather more two people coming *closer and closer* to each other with greater intensity. Thus, what is Burgos saying about their “unification” and love?

La Flor de la Playa is actually the novella where the word *amor* is mentioned the least. Yet, there are still ways to analyze the representation of love and its definition. Many of the first five pages are characterized by describing the couple’s possessions and money. Elisa and Enrique do not earn a lot of money, yet the reader is informed of exactly what they have. For example, Elisa saves just enough sometimes from her job in a factory to buy “agua de Colonia, jabón, y polvos” for her powder room. She likes the powder with that “frasquito de crème Simon y alguna esencia de las que venden por onzas” (312). Furthermore, shoes are her fetish. As a Madrid seamstress,

su lujo...eran los zapatos, descotados y de tacón muy alto, con las medias finas y la cabellera bien peinada para salir *a pelo* o con un velillo puesto de careta, flotando sobre la espalda de un modo tentador (312).

Elisa, therefore, is a woman very knowledgeable on nice goods and clothing and enjoys pampering herself when she can afford it.

Burgos also portrays Enrique as a man aware of money and fashion. He only earns two thousand pesetas, but is able to have an apartment, dress “decentemente,” and take his girlfriend out for a coffee once in a while. He frequently refers to his financial situation and assures Elisa that he will eventually give her nice gifts: a “blusa de seda lavable,” and “zapatos y medios de seda” (313). Hopefully someday he will be able to buy himself a pair of striped pants and a new suit (313). Yet, these declarations are usually preceded by “when I get paid...” (313). Thus, Enrique makes promises but probably will never be able to fulfill *all* of them with his modest salary.

Burgos’ detailed account of their possessions continues when the two are packing for their trip. Enrique successfully earns three thousand seven hundred pesetas in July, and the two are finally able to have a romantic getaway. Enrique buys his girlfriend “una faldita de lana blanca y otra azul” (314). Elisa also receives “un jersey [de] color cereza” (314) that she had thought was eternally out of her reach. Dressed in her new silk black dress, Elisa looks like a queen (314). Objects other than clothes are also highlighted. Remedios makes sure that her roommate does not forget “una plancha” and “varios cacharros” (314). Enrique packs his socks, “pañuelos,” and “una multitud de corbatas e innumerables cuellos y camisas” (314). He previously had bought new black shoes, elegant threaded pants, and more jackets. Even food does not escape their concern. They remember everything: “vino, botella de agua, [y] el termo con leche y café” (314).

In summary, Burgos often writes in a “laundry-list” style when describing the couple’s possessions, consequently displaying a concern for detail that was not as evident in the three other novellas¹. This detailed inventory of objects is also important because it indicates an understanding of love between two people as something practically tangible. The desire to “get more, buy more, and have more” signifies an inflated dependence on currency, consumerism, and the possibility of consumerism. Elisa and Enrique worry about money, they can only take a trip together once they have extra money, and Enrique repeatedly announces what he will buy his girlfriend once he has more money. The definition of love in this part of the novella, therefore, is material unification. Elisa and Enrique go on a romantic trip, but the love element seems to come more from the act of buying nice clothes and packing a suitcase. Being in love is equated with checking more “materials” off their list whether they are tangible or not: eating together, sightseeing together, and sharing a bed in the hotel. Everything becomes a separate good/product just waiting to be consumed by the couple. This literal and tangible shopping trip defines “being in love” for Elisa and Enrique.

All of this “getting ready” for the trip culminates with Elisa sitting next to her boyfriend on the train, prepared to begin “su papel de esposa” (314). She directs her concern more toward *acting* like a wife than really contemplating her feelings. All of their “things” that surround them become props, and her focus on acting accentuates their material-heavy, perhaps even stage-like, environment. Furthermore, the next sentence again supports their intense awareness of money. When they realize that one Spanish

¹These passages in *La Flor de la Playa* bear a remarkable similarity in style to *Sister Carrie* (1900), a novel by the American author Theodore Dreiser. Burgos’ attention to detail with clothing and goods parallels the techniques used in *Sister Carrie*, and more generally, American literary naturalism and realism. Although not relevant to this thesis on Burgos on her novellas, both *La Flor de la Playa* and *Sister Carrie* provide many opportunities to analyze society’s increasing craze for unlimited consumerism and the struggles people must go through in finding an occupation that supports that lifestyle.

peseta is worth double in Portugal, it is their “primera alegría.” Thus, a sense of financial unification accompanies the material unification definition of love found in *La Flor de la Playa*. When a man and a woman have a relationship together, it signifies a union and a consolidation of resources. Money can be shared, and logically, more things can be bought. “Money” sometimes does not even have to be literally money. The reciprocity of profit can function in other ways. Burgos writes in a time when many women ran the home while the man worked. Yet, there is still teamwork. The husband earns money and the wife raises children, cooks, and cleans: all essential parts of running a family. Thus, since Elisa quit her job at the factory to be with Enrique, she can still be seen as bringing resources to the relationship even if she does not work. In conclusion, Elisa and Enrique demonstrate in the initial parts of the novella that love signifies completely uniting with another person in the hopes of achieving greater economic (material + financial) security.

In summary, each of these four stories includes passages where Burgos explains love in different ways: caring about another person, stagnation, devotion and loyalty, sex, achieving eternity, and attaining material and financial security. Sometimes the scope is broad, such as devotion and caring, and sometimes it is more specific, like sex. These moments do not represent all the ways in which Burgos discusses love. Nor am I saying that each example is the overall love message of each story. In *La Flor de la Playa* for instance, Elisa and Enrique think they are in love, but eventually realize that they are wrong. They separate and say good bye to each other. I will return to this story, as well as the others, and explain why their relationship failed. For now though, the important thing to remember about my discussion in this section is that I have pulled out different passages in varying moments of the stories to illustrate the variety of ways Burgos addresses love.

Another essential factor in understanding Burgos' writing is that this method of exploring love diversely in multiple stories arose out of necessity: the necessity to portray love accurately. With just utilizing the one word *amor*, Burgos transcends boundaries and explains what love can represent on various levels. She does not simplify love by resorting to cliché synonyms, such as "having butterflies in your stomach." Also, the classical Petrarchan description of love as a clash of opposites is not imitated.

Melodrama exists, but her lovers do not feel hot and cold at the same time, or go crazy from exhaustion and the inability to sleep. Finally, Burgos does not annoy her audience by overusing the word. *Amor* appears frequently, but not excessively. Her dual subtlety and precision in addressing love achieves such an admirable literary quality: successfully identifying and defining a key piece of the human experience, yet still leaving room for considering love's additional representations.

Burgos' concentration on various types of love also has other consequences in relation to critiquing her work. Two main concepts emerge. First, as Maryellen Bieder states, "Burgos publishe[s] much of her fiction in the popular, mass-market novella format" (Vollendorf 251). Her creative writing is distributed throughout the country just like her newspaper articles and columns. She is an author very much in the public eye. Her stories are popular. Thus, this fact gives another reason why writing about love is appropriate and an acceptable thematic choice. She makes it an accessible theme for her wide-reaching audience. Alina's love, which involves caring about soldiers, and Fernanda's love, which initially means devotion and loyalty, are rather easy to understand. Plus, love is something that (hopefully) everyone in society has experienced. Even younger readers could pick up her novellas and understand love as something common, yet having the ability to change and take on different meanings. She is not

writing about existentialism or metaphysics: themes that would not be able to bounce easily amongst different readers in her audience. Love, on the other hand, has room to develop.

Second, and most importantly, this analysis of Burgos' treatment of love challenges a long-standing opinion of her work as relatively unimpressive. Bieder explains that the

scant appreciation accorded Burgos' fiction by literary critics before the 1970's derives in part from the author's reliance on the realist mode and on everyday language in an era of literary modernism and vanguard experimentation (251).

In short, her work is easy to read and follows traditional story-telling formats. Her style contrasts with the presumably more innovative and striking work by other writers that surrounded her. I suggest, though, that citing Burgos' creative exploration of love immediately pushes aside her reputation as an average or uncomplicated writer and makes her more deserving of analysis and respect. This is not to say that her stories could not be read just for pleasure or entertainment. Alina wailing over her fallen Gonzalo in the end of *En la Guerra* and Fernanda and Luis' frenzied kissing in *El permisionario* definitely exemplify melodrama. Bieder even asserts that Burgos herself "conceive[s] of her narratives as entertainment for a mass audience" (Bieder 251) and a medium for discussing social problems. Yet, in total, Burgos' stories and herself as author cannot hinge indefinitely on her "lack" of experimentalism, for it is the dual ability to read her stories with a common urge for basic entertainment and an advanced critical eye that confirms the scholarly value of her works.

The attention on love in Burgos' novellas, though, does not end here. This author adds another dimension to her analysis of love that brings the reader closer to the female

characters, consequently revealing her unique interest in the individual and its struggles with finding love.

Love and Problems with the Female “Self”

The previous section illustrates that Burgos indeed offers much to dissect and discuss about this fundamental human emotion. She breaks down love in a variety of ways. In her four novellas, love can be defined as caring, stagnation, and anything in between. Also, love is always addressed as something that involves the woman-man pair.

However, if the female-male couple and their love are highlighted in her stories, why do all of the female protagonists fail to end up in a happy, successful relationship? The last scene in *En la guerra* is Alina sobbing hysterically over her dead lover’s body. Matilde in *El perseguidor* suggests that she will allow Daniel to enter her life, but Burgos never really shows this woman and man married or content and loving each other farther in the future. Finally, in the end of *El permisionario*, Fernanda watches her husband leave as she fights the waves of jealousy coursing through her body. These women are capable of initially or eventually acknowledging love in a positive way, but acquiring and sustaining a relationship with the one they love does not happen. Elisa in *La Flor de la Playa* is the woman who is represented as the strongest and most admirable in the end. However, she too fails to maintain a successful love with her boyfriend: she walks away from her relationship. These plot lines, therefore, encourage me to delve deeper and unearth the message Burgos is writing. By looking at the heterosexual relationship (two people), breaking it down (one person – one person), and focusing on just the woman, what remains is the female individual, or more specifically, the female self.

En la guerra, *El perseguidor*, *El permissionario*, and *La Flor de La Playa* all focus specifically on the female self and its struggles in the face of love. I define “self” as a combination of the woman’s sense of identity and desires. For this section, I will discuss in more detail each woman’s love relationship. Also, I will highlight the status of the female protagonist’s “self” in two ways: by looking at how she approaches love and her relationship with a man and by categorizing how she regards her decisions, behavior, and/or role with love.

Returning to Melilla, Alina in *En la guerra* begins to have feelings for Gonzalo. As explained before, when Alina learns that Gonzalo does not have any loved ones at home missing him, she confidently states that she and her husband will love him. Alina, therefore, ironically foreshadows the passionate feelings that she will feel for her friend in the future. The relationship begins with friendship and grows. Burgos writes that she “había entablado con el capitán una amistad verdadera” (193). But, this friendship exists among other feelings, unknown even to Alina at this point. Their “platonic” relationship prospers “bajo la base de que ella llevaba a su vida el calor de un afecto sincero y desconocido” (193). She is not yet totally aware of her true feelings.

Alina indicates that she feels loved and happy when she is close to her husband and Gonzalo, but the reader eventually sees her affection turn more toward the younger man. He spends a lot of time with her. They eat together in the hotel, look for messages from the front when her husband is away, and spend time together in the evenings. Furthermore, she eventually identifies the cause of her increasing nervousness: Alina simultaneously wants the war to stop and continue. She fears the end of the war because it will be “el fin de su dulce intimidad con Gonzalo” (204). Her platonic feelings have now developed into something more intense. Burgos highlights and confirms the status

of their new relationship with beautiful nature imagery in a garden/park scene. They walk together at night in the Parque Hernández, and

entre los bosquecillos de palmeras...[a]quellas noches africanas, con su tranquila calma, tenían una poesía suprema.

Additionally,

los dos saboreaban la dulzura de aquel ambiente delicioso felices de verse el uno cerca del otro... Todos sus actos iban impregnados de la ternura de un amor verdadero (205).

Burgos goes on to describe the palm tree leaves, a conch shell, and the silver disk of the moon (205-206). Thus, the park comes to represent an Eden where the two can finally be alone, enjoy the rich atmosphere, and feel attracted to one another. Yet, there is also the hint of an impending threat. The ambience is filled with “el sabor acre del peligro” (205), thus calling to attention the possibility that this “true love” (if it even is a true love) will not last.

These paragraphs discuss the love felt between Alina and Gonzalo. Why then, didn't I include a discussion of their definition of love in the previous section? While it would be possible to define what their love means to them, I believe that their relationship should rather be used to identify Alina's problems with her “self” as it deals with love. We know that she and Gonzalo love each other. The exact definition of their love is not needed. When he announces that he must go to the front, Alina cannot speak; she is overcome with emotion, contemplating the danger her loved one faces (208). Gonzalo prepares to leave, and the bugles sing in the background announcing the company's departure (208). He calls to her in a passionate voice, fixates on her eyes, and asks her to give him a kiss, “[e]l primero y el último!” (208) as he heads toward his death.

In this romantic moment though, “en que el corazón debía abrirse al amor” (208), Alina is overcome by worries and the image of her husband and does not kiss him. She murmurs “no” and watches Gonzalo walk away after just kissing her hand.

This moment, therefore, is the climax. It is the opportunity for Alina to reveal her emotions and make that literal, sexual connection with the one she really loves before he goes to war. Some readers may argue that Alina did the right thing. She restrains herself from appearing to cheat on her husband. Yet, Burgos clearly demonstrates that Alina makes a mistake. As Gonzalo walks away, she sends him an imaginary kiss with all of her soul, the kiss that she has just negated from her lips (209). She feels no “remordimientos” (209) at this point.

Yet, after a few days, when she tries to think of her husband and worry about his dangerous situation, “sólo evocaba la figura de Gonzalo, herido, tal vez muerto” (213) and gone from her life forever. Gonzalo occupies her thoughts, not her husband, the one whom she “should” love. With no news from the front, she must wait a few days for the company to return. Finally, she sees the troops appear on the horizon. As they roll back into Melilla, Alina is waiting anxiously for only one man. Her husband looks at her tenderly as she approaches him, and thinks she is running toward him. However, he soon realizes that for Alina, “toda su alma [vuela] hacia el amado” (216), Gonzalo. She runs past her husband and to Gonzalo, who is dead, laid out on a stretcher. She makes a painful scream and is “ciega” and “loca” (217) above his dead body. Alina is completely delirious at the sight of her fallen lover, and calls him her lover out loud. Thus, she now does not have any concern for her husband and his knowledge about her side relationship. He is obviously there, observing the entire scene. Lastly, at the height of the dramatic

moment, she dips her clean dress into Gonzalo's wounds and finally gives him a kiss, that kiss "negado" that she now regrets.

There is no question in the end about whom Alina really loves. Although she is melodramatic, Alina is driven to destruction by denying a kiss and losing her love, Gonzalo, forever. Therefore, *hesitation* causes her descent into pain and remorse and signifies the status of her "self" throughout the novella. She wanted to do something, but held back.

The next story, *El perseguidor*, reveals an interesting struggle as well between Matilde, her "self", and love. I believe the easiest way to analyze this novella is to review Matilde's overall trajectory: where she begins, ends, and her decisions along the way. During her childhood and into her adult years, she lives with her family and alternates living in Madrid and Córdoba. Her father is a "cazador impenitente" (273) who forces the family to spend Decembers and Januarys in the Andalusian countryside while he hunts partridges. Their farm is actually very beautiful. Mountains surround it on all sides in the valley, and it is a poetic scene, "con su porche blanco, y su aspecto de casita de aldea" (275).

Yet, the days are dominated by the male hunting group. Her father hunts partridges all day with his party. Burgos offers a poetic description of these animals as their free and instinct-driven natural world is violently intruded upon by the sweat and guns of men. In a "drama de amor" (276),

Las dos perdices, libres y dichosas, oían el canto enardecido del macho solitario. La tentación de la hembra, atraída por aquel macho, le haría contestarle, y bien pronto se entablaba un dialogo de promesas de amor entre ella y el

desconocido...El desconocido vencía siempre y la hembra venia emocionada, algo recelosa, coqueta, gallarda, en busca de su nueva aventura (276).

The passage continues to describe the female partridge as she “flirts” with the opposite sex. She raises her head, but soon falls dead to the piercing hunter’s bullet. The male, angry and hostile, tries to avenge her death by charging his rival, the hunter.

Unfortunately, he has no chance. The hunter shoots him, and the scene quickly ends.

When the men come home for dinner, this destruction is what they talk about. Their “conversación era siempre la misma.” In addition to hunting, they only talk of “quejas, de violencia, de disputas” (276). The men deliberately boast in front of the poor *campesinos* and announce their feats of manliness, all too pleased with themselves and their hunting stories. The environment is suffocating for Matilde. Granted, hunting is sometimes necessary and has provided families with food since the beginning of mankind. However, the description of hunting in this novella concentrates on depicting uncompassionate men and their zealous *macho* pride. They are not hunting lions or bears, but defenseless partridges, using bird-whistles to lure the female, kill her, and then kill the male. The trickery and false superiority the men grant themselves sickens Matilde.

In a way, hunting the partridges parallels a rape scene. The female is manipulated and harmed, all while providing entertainment for the men. Matilde marries, therefore, “para escapar de aquel tormento” (277) that spans two months every year. These experiences with her father and the other hunters undoubtedly are the origin of Matilde’s problem with men throughout the novella. Her view of love as stagnation, explained previously, relates to her desire to break away from the men that hold her down. Much

like the hunter's power over the partridge, her father and first husband tied her to a specific place and life with no concern for her desires.

Consequently, Matilde begins to travel after her husband dies. Part of the reason is that she cannot be satisfied in Madrid either. The city and the people bore her (278). Relationships and friendships between other people in the city are superficial and only materialize in "convenient" moments. She wants to be free. Consequently, Matilde travels to Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and England. Her enjoyable trip to Venice though, is interrupted by an unexpected visitor. Suddenly "todas las calles le parecían iguales" like a labyrinth, and the bells in the distance produce "un rumor siniestro" (282) and ominous. She realizes that someone is following her: a shadowy and vulgar man with "la silueta de un hombre del pueblo" (283). She cannot tell what he looks like, because his features are hidden under a hat and the collar of his coat. Yet, paradoxically, she feels as if she knows this man. Matilde recognizes him from somewhere else, but cannot pinpoint it. This shadow man continues to follow her and haunt her in all the countries she visits as she confusedly attempts to identify him as a lowly thief, murderer, or poor worker.

This persecution though, ends in London. Matilde stays with a Spanish woman and her British husband. The monotony of married life and "love" surfaces for a moment when Matilde analyzes the couple. The husband collects stamps and fiddles with them "sin ocuparse de la esposa" (304). She has her social life and he has his hobbies. There does not seem to be a connection or the freedom that Matilde keeps seeking.

Matilde takes a walk outside to escape the house and the couple, and the silhouette appears again. She drops down to the grass afraid and stays there over an hour in the cold waiting for him to leave. She is sure that she recognizes the vulgar face, "el

rostro vulgar de todos los hombres que llevan altos los cuellos de las chaquetas” (306).

Yet, when she realizes that no one is there, Matilde’s turning point appears:

¿Existía realmente? ¿Aunque existiera, había motivo para sentir aquel
temor ante todos los pobres hombres que vistiesen su vulgar ropa de
trabajadores?

No. (306)

Finally, she sees “con claridad que aquel hombre de la pelliza gris la perseguiría en todas partes” (307).

Matilde now understands that the *perseguidor* is actually a creation of her own mind which has been pushing her further and further into isolation. Burgos categorizes it as “*su perseguidor. La crisis de su soledad*” (307). Her stalker manifests itself psychologically as an amalgamation of “bad man” characteristics: a grungy criminal with dark features and clothing, a shadowy face, and holding low-paying jobs. The image of a menacing sexual predator also comes to mind, probably relating metaphorically to her father’s hunting episodes: the male hunter pursuing the female partridge as well as the mating rituals between the male and female partridges.

Needless to say, this *perseguidor* springs out of Matilde’s suspicion of men, marriage, and love as power-takers: wielding all control and trapping her in one place, whether that place is a literal location or a metaphorical state of being. In trying to run away from these threats and claim her independence, her constant fleeing and the predictable process of traveling to another country, seeing the *perseguidor*, being afraid, and traveling again becomes exactly what she has been fighting: entrapment, cyclical in nature, but oppressive all the same.

I have spent time on elaborating the plot because it is important to understand the details of Matilde's journey as it relates to the status of her "self." As just explained, Matilde has an admirable realization about her life and her decisions. She now sees that the boring couple in London actually has something she wants. They have "entre ellos un lazo de protección, de amparo, de consideraciones" (306) and a life in common. It is acceptable now to be with a man, want to be protected, and possibly find love. She agrees to let Daniel, the man whom she had been pushing away, join her life and love of travel.

Yet, look at the way Matilde reflects on her actions and analyzes her motives. She thinks that

era vano luchar contra el amor y pretender esa vida artificial, egoísta, que suelen tener algunas mujeres por un excesivo celo de su independencia (307).

Additionally, she determines that

[u]n extremo de sujeción le hacia caer en otro extremo de libertad exagerada hasta lo absurdo (307).

Finally, Matilde concludes that "era un delirio el deseo de independencia, que lleva hasta el egoísmo" (307). Instead of praising her new-found happiness and break-through moment, Matilde ultimately regards her experiences as based on pretending, artificiality, and an absurd extreme that was fueled by egotism and jealousy. She takes a very negative view of her actions. Therefore, Matilde's "self" is represented in the end as a place of tension. She criticizes the thing, the process which brought her to her realization. If she had stayed in Madrid or Córdoba, she would never have worked through and figured out her problems with love. Traveling, being alone, and feeling afraid were the necessary ingredients. Thus, the status of Matilde and her "self" in this

novella is one of *criticism*. She flees love and eventually accepts it, but does not embrace and accept the decisions that helped her journey. Rather, she harshly points out her faults and exaggerates her mistakes.

The next novella, *El permissionario*, begins with Fernanda as she eagerly awaits her husband's arrival from the front. Luis has been given vacation time from the military and is going to spend it in Nice, France, with his new bride. Burgos describes Nice positively as a city of "enamorados" (367). Logically, love seems to be the focus, especially with a young, reunited married couple. However, Fernanda becomes less consumed with love and more with jealousy. Her problems with "celos" emerge quickly in the beginning of the story. There is a passage highlighting the Red Cross nurses. With all the wounded soldiers recovering in the Nice hospitals, the nurses are always there. They are "vigilantes" (368) and ready to offer comfort to those in pain. Yet, the tone quickly turns. Fernanda feels "una especie de celos" for these women (368). Almost all of them are beautiful and young, giving off that "mezcla de azul y blanco dulce" (368) with their constant promising, offering, and consoling. Instead of admiring their usefulness and possibility of saving her husband's life if he is wounded, Fernanda turns them into future adulterers. They become "las amadas" of all the wounded men (368).

Her fixation on jealousy and "las otras" that threaten her relationship with her husband continues. Further into the story, when she and Luis began to understand their love a little more, Fernanda expresses fear about divulging all of her feelings. She tells him that she loves him in a new way now, and thinks that he does not love her with the same intensity. She, though, did not feel secure about confronting him with this issue because

[l]a mujer después de haber desplegado toda su alma, de haber entregado todo su secreto, se siente impotente ante las otras, ante todas las otras que tienen sobre ella la superioridad del misterio...cuando nosotras ya, porque lo hemos dado todo, no podemos ofrecer nada (401).

In other words, since she has expressed her concerns and fears, she is now something less than other women who still have something unknown. Notice how she uses “las otras” twice and highlights her inferiority. Furthermore, even though she eventually regards this fear as something “ridículo” (403), she still cannot break away from placing herself against “the other women.” Luis comes to loves her more passionately, and she regards this achievement as a conquest, “la conquista del marido” that gives her the most pride (403). This victory holds even greater importance because she does not have the weapons that the other women have: “las armas de coquetería y de negativas” (403). They kiss and she laughs with the happiness of a “loved” woman who feels triumphant over her rivals (404). The word “rivals” further indicates that her mental organization of the environment is like a battlefield: *me* against *them*. Thus, even though Fernanda eventually believes she “wins” against her opponents, the victory is only important because she situates herself overall as somehow innately less than other women around her.

Her feelings of inadequacy affect the analysis of their desperation and refusal to separate. They dread the end of the vacation when Luis has to return to the front, and hug and kiss to “borrar la desesperación” (404). This behavior is, on the surface, understandable and acceptable. Yet, since we know how Fernanda regards her self and her worth, her anxiety over saying goodbye to him becomes more of a fear of losing him to another woman than just him dying. The desperation aligns more with clinging due to

her obsession with “the other women.” I am not arguing that Burgos fails to express the straightforward sadness over Luis’ impending death, but jealousy takes over Fernanda, a woman who is not entirely sure of herself. Suddenly the re-birth of their love, a moment that should console her in the future if Luis dies, becomes meaningless. All that matters is that she “loses.” Now there is nothing to stop “las otras” from being with her husband.

Granted, some readers may argue that Fernanda has a right to be so paranoid. Burgos informs the reader (quite late and abruptly in the story) that Luis has cheated on her. Also, as he leaves, he knows that he will not be able to combat his future “traiciones del corazón” (410). Additionally, Luis admits that men too fear their loss of mystery if they reveal all of their thoughts and concerns (402). He also experiences feelings of extreme jealousy. His departing pain is a “dolor celoso de dejarla entre todos aquellos hombres” (410) that could take his place and be with his widow. He is jealous, therefore her jealousy matches his and it is logical. Yet, in analyzing just the woman in this novella, the heavy saturation of jealousy as related to the status of her “self” is just too powerful to be cancelled out or brushed aside as acceptable. Burgos includes another “red flag” indicating Fernanda’s problem with jealousy in the end. While watching Luis leave on the train, Fernanda’s last thought is, not surprisingly, that she feels jealous; “sentía celos de la “ultima mirada que pudiera perderse en otros ojos o dejar en los de su Luis otros rasgos (410). Her focus is once again an obsessive fear of what another hypothetical woman can do, and what she herself cannot. In conclusion, through jealousy, Burgos shows Fernanda dealing with her “self” with a high level of *inferiority*, frequently acknowledging her own inadequacy.

Finally though, with *La Flor de la Playa*, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Burgos indicates early in the story that Elisa and dealing with her “self” and feelings of

love for Enrique may run into some trouble. Remember that in the beginning, Elisa equates commercial goods and the economic lifestyle of “being a wife” with love. They arrive in Portugal, and Enrique buys her more “things:” a hat, gloves, and purse all “muy de moda” (317). Interestingly though, Burgos indicates that the hat impedes her movement (317). She is not used to wearing one. These new gifts make her feel “satisfecha, encantada y al mismo tiempo” (317), bothered. She is used to walking “tan libre y tan desembarazada” (317), but the hat adds extra weight. This “peso extraordinario” (317) is an obvious metaphor for her new status as “the woman” in the relationship and all the responsibilities that accompany this position. However, does Elisa fully desire this change and new identity?

She and Enrique try to have a spectacular lovers’ getaway, but it just does not happen. They tour the little beaches, share a bed, and watch other tourists bathe in the warm water. Unfortunately, there are no sparks, only a slow and progressing boredom. It is not the landscape or beach that bores them but they themselves; “los había aburrido su compañía” (351). Elisa clearly acknowledges that Enrique is not the man for her. He is “bueno, atento, condescendiente; pero ella no [puede] resignarse a estar constantemente a su lado.” She does not love him as much as she thought she did (352).

Roberta Johnson considers this couple’s separation “a rather utopian idea” (240) that Burgos has constructed for marriage customs in early twentieth-century Spain:

that a man and a woman who are contemplating marriage might have the opportunity to test the waters before they enter into a legal agreement (240).

Johnson’s analysis is logical. However, due to the abundance of details in the end describing Elisa’s handling of the breakup, I suggest that the woman and her feelings about love are more of the focus of the story, not the experience of the couple. Burgos

shows that Elisa does not block her feelings or hesitate to acknowledge them. Also, she does not regard herself as inadequate, or think that the failure of their relationship is her fault. Nor does she try to falsely extend their “love” by trying to hold on just a little longer, or convincing herself that something physical like more kissing or sex can change the situation. After their vacation, they take the train back to Madrid. Elisa returns with mixed emotions; she feels both “alegría y...tristeza” (362). She mourns the death of their love, their idea of being together forever, but in the end realizes that it was still just a “bello sueño de amor” (363). Elisa acknowledges her feelings, and accepts them, and will move on from the dream she once had. Therefore, Elisa ultimately values her thoughts, desires, and decisions in a positive and healthy way, thus illustrating an admirable *embracing* of her “self”, life, and actions, even when the consequences do not always “appear” to be fruitful and enjoyable.

Self-Esteem: The Key to Love and Life

By analyzing these four novellas with a focus on women and their problems, I suggest that Burgos shows that love and the possibility of finding it in a male-female relationship depend more on the individual rather than the couple. All of these women, until Elisa in *La Flor de la Playa*, have problems that are unresolved in the end. They hesitate, criticize themselves too harshly, or become consumed by jealousy and a sense of inferiority. I suggest, therefore, that this hesitation, criticism, and jealousy all point towards a problem with the “self” that can be understood more specifically as a problem of self-esteem. All of the women have a *low self-esteem*, related to control, which includes: having a faulty self-awareness, a faulty notion of their identity, and/or not fully embracing their desires. They try to control their lives and situations around them.

Granted, this act logically looks like it leads to the opposite result: having a high self-esteem. However, Alina, Matilde, and Fernanda exert control incorrectly. They emerge in the end as seeking or finally accepting love, but they have already unknowingly barred themselves from attaining it.

In *En la guerra*, Alina arrives in Melilla as practically the only visible and known woman at the front. The custom there is that the “cristianos, moros, y judíos” compete “en ocultar a sus hembras” (167). Alina, on the other hand, is presented confidently by her husband. She also exhibits control by claiming an identity for herself; she is the woman who loves all, ready to give her love to any soldier who is without family or friends back home. As noted previously, perpetuating her “amor maternal” (193) is how she begins a relationship with Gonzalo. Granting this platonic love to others also combats the weapons of war that will kill many young men. Thus, Alina has a method of defining her “self” and its role in Melilla.

However, when her and Gonzalo’s feelings for each other escalate, her established sense of control blinds her to realizing that she really should release her hold on the surroundings, give in to Gonzalo’s kiss, and consequently fulfill her desires with the one she actually loves. She feels the painful repercussions of denying this kiss as she waits for him to return, and then sees his dead body brought back from the battle field. The only thing she can do in the end is fall even more out of control; blind and crazy, she screams and weeps over Gonzalo’s corpse. Her concern for the public, the soldiers, has now disappeared. It never really accomplished anything anyway. She is concerned now only with herself and the painful end of her love and relationship with Gonzalo.

Some may argue that the ending is appropriate. She hesitated before and now is compensating. Additionally, when she waits for the soldiers to come back, Burgos

describes her as filled with an “egoísmo feroz” (216). Being egotistical seems to imply the opposite of low self-esteem: an inflated *confidence* in one’s self. However, I still suggest that Alina’s actions do not demonstrate egotism or a correct understanding of her “self.” Her problem with self-esteem does not equate so much with depression or self-hatred, but more with faulty self-awareness and misplaced value. When she has the opportunity to claim who she really is (Gonzalo’s lover, not the soldiers’, generally), she lets the opportunity pass. Furthermore, she destroys herself in the end by letting herself go completely, disregarding the presence of her husband who is watching the entire scene. Her unproductive role in Melilla as the “lover of all,” the negated kiss, and the belated kiss taken together all show that she exhibits control in the wrong way at the wrong times. Kissing Gonzalo would have meant breaking marriage vows; however, Burgos demonstrates that this action would have shown a more complete and secure young woman: someone who can correctly assess herself, her desires, and what she needs to do to fulfill them.

As explained previously, Matilde in *El perseguidor* chooses to travel. Her assertion of control is ironically defined by trying to lead an “out of control” life style: traveling around Europe by herself and having no comfortable place to call home. She returns to Spain in between some trips, but still feels anxious and uneasy there. Thus, traveling is a way to announce her independence and make her own decisions, ultimately showing a strong ability to control the situation around her. She does not feel “right” in Madrid, so she takes the appropriate actions and does what is necessary to make herself feel better.

In the end though, she lets go of this control. She realizes that the problem, *el perseguidor*, actually comes from within her. Her traveling and fear of her “stalker” is

actually an exaggerated self-defense mechanism. She wants to flee love and marriage because these things can restrict her. When she understands her fear, she figures out that all along she really had desired to be protected by a man in a comfortable home. She “había ocultado” (307) this secret from her husband, but now realizes that it is acceptable for a woman to have these wishes.

I highlighted previously though, that Matilde is very hard on herself. She understands now why she fought so hard to control her life by traveling, but in the end she gives up all control. Unlike Alina who exerts control at the incorrect moments, Matilde expresses an “all or nothing” attitude about herself and control. In the end she is now with Daniel, and feels “satisfecha, feliz, en una vida sanamente equilibrada” (307). Yet, how can it be a state of equilibrium when she has just denounced all of her previous thoughts, emotions, and reasoning for wanting to travel?

I agree that Matilde makes some sort of positive progression in understanding herself and her fears. She at one time loathed monotony, especially in Spain. But on the train with Daniel, the rolling hills of Castilla “en su monotonía y su inmovilidad” transform into something more invigorating and “alive;” the landscape now looks like an ocean, constantly undulating with waves (307). Additionally, I think that Burgos portrays Daniel as a better man than Matilde’s first husband. Daniel is more caring, like a respectful and kind friend, and Matilde feels that she and her desires will not be sacrificed in her new relationship (307) like they were in her marriage, and during her childhood with her father’s hunting. Nevertheless, the repetition of Matilde characterizing her previous independence as “un delirio” and something absurd (307) suggests that she will hesitate if she ever desires independence or travel in the future. The traveling opened the door for Matilde to “see” herself, but in the end she is ashamed of this process and

believes it indicates her “debilidad” (306). Consequently, she will feel ashamed again if in the future she wants to travel more, take a vacation without her boyfriend, or simply complain to him that she feels like her ideas are not being valued. She will just continue to criticize what she believes to be her “weakness.” In conclusion, she mistakenly defines herself as someone who is weak, when in reality she took charge and paved the way toward an enlightening experience. She too suffers from an inability to acknowledge her identity, accept it, and accept her desires from beginning to the end of the novella.

The third novella also shows the female protagonist’s problem with self-esteem. Control, again, plays a key role. Fernanda’s quick ability in *El permisionario* to become jealous reveals her feelings of inferiority. She is always worrying about other women, what they have, and what she does not have. Furthermore, Fernanda perpetuates her inferiority by thinking that she can utilize sexuality simultaneously to claim her husband and push away the other woman, consequently controlling her threatening environment. Burgos elaborates on sex in a few parts of the novella by highlighting the women’s hands and how Luis kisses them. With Fernanda’s “mirada celosa” (399) always watching, she thinks she notices

[los] temblores imperceptibles de las mujeres bajo aquel beso, y veía
empañárseles los ojos y entreabrírseles los labios...[los besos se] despertaban
deseos, inquietudes, anhelos (399).

Burgos, though, hints that Fernanda might be exaggerating the underlying sexuality of the hand kisses. Luis has been unfaithful to his wife, and he likes being around these women. But, among “aquella sensualidad no había una influencia real, sino la influencia de la muerte” (399), the war, and the overall idea of life being threatened.

It is not surprising, therefore, that right after this passage Fernanda and Luis “re-discover” themselves and their relationship. Much of their new connection is based on sex. Thus, Fernanda counters the women’s sexual appeal by becoming more sexual herself. She and Luis kiss and hug each other frantically, and their friends in the hotel know that they have confined themselves in their room to be very physical and not spend a minute apart. They are very cynical and laugh at the couple’s obsessive behavior. Yet, Fernanda feels she has somehow won. After laughing happily about defeating her “rivals,” she tells Luis that they have surprised all of the other women. They will be shocked to see him truly in love with his wife (404). This “truly in love,” though, is based on their being very physical and shutting themselves away from the group. It is as if Fernanda were an immature teenager, stealing kisses from her boyfriend between classes, gloating about it, and regarding the kisses as undeniable proof that he is hers. She is still so worried about “las otras,” and the sexual moments are not even described in a way that highlights the individual pleasure Fernanda receives.

Most importantly, the jealousy and focus on sex is unproductive. She still feels inferior in the end as he leaves, and Burgos hints that Luis will probably cheat on her again. Moreover, Fernanda and Luis have not stopped the war or made it impossible for Luis to die. He can still be pierced by a bullet at any time. In conclusion, in her efforts to control the impending war, her husband, and her jealousy, Fernanda ends up fixating too much on the “others” around her and incorrectly links success – the success of their marriage and her success as a person -- with sexual behavior.

There are few details suggesting that Fernanda regards herself as attractive, intelligent, worthy, or capable of being independent. I realize that the story is set against the backdrop of a terrible war and Fernanda and Luis are lovers who have to separate.

Melodrama and claims of “I cannot live without you” fit the drama of the moment. She says that she will die without him (406) and love him forever (406). However, Fernanda does not have high self-esteem, and Luis’ love does not make her stronger either. Rather, Fernanda sacrifices her “self” by getting caught up in a furious desperation to hang on to her husband *physically*, especially when other flirtatious women are present. The heightened presence of jealousy and sex suggests that their “love” is not a true, solid, and positive definition of love with both partners feeling secure. Granted, most women would be devastated at the loss of their husband. Yet, from a mental health/self-esteem standpoint, Fernanda is weak, lacking substance, and probably unable to stand on her own in a mature manner when, as Burgos suggests, Luis perishes.

Elisa in *La Flor de la Playa*, though, is the contrast to these three women. I have already explained how in the end she leaves her relationship on a high note, sad that her romantic getaway failed, but fully understanding the situation and accepting her decisions. This mix of emotions is portrayed in Burgos’ description of the scenery as Elisa looks out her cab window. She “[s]entía ganas de llorar, pero el aire de la mañana y el aspecto de aquel barrio de Madrid, que despertaba, eran optimistas (363). This optimism is also found at the conclusion of *El perseguidor* with Matilde and the Castilian countryside, but Matilde shatters that positive ending by unleashing a severe set of criticisms on her past actions as extreme and absurd, ultimately revealing how she does *not* hold her “self” in high regard. Elisa on the other hands, demonstrates security, hopefulness, and resiliency with no dramatic self-attacks.

Conclusion

With all of this discussion on love, we can now return to Rougemont and offer some final thoughts on Burgos, her depictions of love in the novellas, and what it says about the possibility of couples having and sustaining it. On one hand, Burgos' approach to love is incompatible with one of Rougemont's arguments. He states that a true or original love has been forgotten and veiled by society's increasing craze for passion. Burgos, though, refrains from defining love or even declaring that a "true" love exists in her four novellas. Granted, almost everyone, including Burgos, probably agrees that "true" love is something pleasurable and good. In reality, however, each person's experience with love can be totally different. How can one person say that their love is better or more correct than someone else's? Therefore, although Rougemont's first argument is plausible, Burgos uses love in her novellas with a more universal approach: love can be understood and represented in many different ways. There is no *original* to return to. Exploring love in this way allows Burgos literary freedom and demonstrates her talent as a writer. In addition, this treatment of love supports her self-esteem message. Although readers of Burgos should analyze the text and ask (among other questions) "what does love mean for woman A, woman B, woman C," and so on, these individual definitions do not constitute the core of the woman-love question. Burgos seems to suggest that no matter what "love" means for the woman, what determines the possibility of attaining that love depends on how she regards her "self" and whether or not she can accurately gauge her response to love.

On the other hand though, there are similarities between Rougemont's and Burgos' psychological treatment of love. Rougemont's second argument highlights the great intrusion the passion myth has had on love in the Western mind. Society has

become seduced by passion, believes it is the desired experience, and wants it even though it is connected with taboos such as adultery. Passion signifies suffering, but people want it anyway. Simply stated, chasing passion erases the possibility of achieving love.

This contradictory mental process occurs as well in three of Burgos' four female protagonists. In their quest for love, Alina, Matilde, and Fernanda destroy their chances of achieving it. Alina hesitates from taking that final step (or, rather, kiss) that will unite her and Gonzalo as lovers. Matilde tears apart the process that brings her to enlightenment, and Fernanda fixates on jealousy and sexuality, which as a result perpetuates her jealousy. They have low self-esteem, and consequently do not recognize or accept their own identities and desires. They all eventually think they are on the right track toward love, when in fact, they are not. The individual is not stable, therefore any chance of a relationship and love will be unstable and fail. In conclusion, Burgos demonstrates in her stories that love can only be realized between a man and a woman when the woman has a "positive self-esteem." (I am not arguing that the male characters in the novellas are free from all responsibilities in relationships. Men presumably need to have high self-esteem as well in order to achieve love. Yet, since my focus in this thesis is on the female protagonists and their individual journeys towards love, analysis of male self-esteem would not be relevant here.)

Unlike Rougemont, Burgos validates the exploration of various definitions of love. Yet, both Rougemont and Burgos emphasize the psychological contradictions that exist when people deal with love. Whatever specific definition love may have, the only real obstacles to it are in ourselves, and the strongest is self-contempt (Rougemont 6). Thus, Burgos contextualizes Rougemont's "self-contempt" in her writing as a question of

self-esteem, with special emphasis on women's self-contempt in normal heterosexual relationships. The female protagonist either has low self-esteem (marked by hesitancy, criticism, and jealousy) or high self-esteem (marked by acceptance of "self" and desires). Most importantly, along with the possibility of society's recognizing passion's illusions, Burgos similarly chooses to highlight a "problem" that can be fixed: self-esteem is something that can be "worked on" and eventually improve.

Many women, when it comes time to console their female friends over a boyfriend issue or a breakup, run into the "self" question. If a woman criticizes herself constantly and is not secure with her identity, the friends employ the common phrase: "well, how do you expect *him* to love you if you cannot love yourself?" With this everyday conversation in mind, perhaps Burgos' message becomes most clear. A relationship consists of two people; both individual parts need to be strong in-and-of themselves in order to balance and support the other half successfully. This idea applies exactly to Alina, Matilde, and Fernanda. They all eventually either accept, want, and even think they are in love, but by constantly stifling themselves they destroy the hopes of ever attaining that equilibrium, that equation with a man where love is reached and sustainable.

I did not elaborate as much on Burgos' use of war and battlefield themes, but it is important to highlight that including war as a backdrop further intensifies each woman's internal struggle. The women are basically at war with themselves: the fight between knowing what they want, denying it and punishing themselves for wanting it, and not even being aware of it. The external battle parallels the internal battle. However, Burgos reveals that the individual female's defeat in her personal war actually emerges as the more devastating event. Although dead bodies pile up and blood is shed in Morocco and

other parts of Europe, the real tragedy is found in the self-destructive, low self-esteeming woman. Ironically, war sometimes becomes a necessary step in the pathway toward love.

Elisa and her ending in *La Flor de la Playa*, however, do not fit the pattern of the first three female characters. If my argument states that having high self-esteem – embracing oneself and all the accompanying thoughts, actions, and desires – is the necessary preliminary step towards finding and sustaining love with a man, why does Elisa's relationship fail? Why does she walk away alone? Burgos probably did not write these four novellas with this extensive analysis of love in mind. I assume that she did not foresee a future undergraduate student reading, critiquing, and organizing her plot lines and characters in the hopes of finding new and interesting analyses on the way females and males interact. Yet, I believe that Elisa's conclusion adds a valuable piece to the puzzle. Respecting oneself is the key toward loving another. Nonetheless, Burgos shows that this pathway is not always necessary. That is to say, love at the proverbial end of the story is not *required*. Elisa does not finish her vacation with a man holding her hand, but she still emerges as a strong figure. And there will probably be more suitors in the future.

After all, Burgos had one husband, but left him in order to teach, travel, and lead a better life. Their marriage failed, but life continued. Burgos also had Ramón Gómez de la Serna as her lover, but that relationship ended, too. I cannot make a claim about her self-esteem; however Burgos lived as a single woman and succeeded in life in many ways at a time when many avenues remained closed to women. The real and the literary, Burgos and Elisa, demonstrate that a woman should have high self-esteem preferably all the time and not just when dealing with men. If “feeling good about yourself” and love were connected with a string, the shape would not be one linear string with a knot (high self-esteem) leading towards the next (love), but rather an immense intertwined web with

many pathways to follow. Having high self-esteem makes love possible, but no one says love *must* be reached at the end of the journey for the woman. Having high self-esteem can lead to successes of many kinds: in occupations, awards, physical health, and friendships.

Burgos' four novellas represent this web with answers about what a woman should and should not do in her quest for love. Low self-esteem undoubtedly bars her from finding and holding on to a loving relationship with a man. Yet, this web also serves as a safety net, a reassuring message to the unsatisfied wife, the teenager who has never had a boyfriend, or any woman who notices that she feels better when she is independent and not attached. Love, between a woman and a man, can be reached, but no one says it has to be. A woman can still stand on her own and be complete.

This complete, independent woman image perhaps sends the most powerful idea to Burgos' readers, as well as matching perfectly with Burgos and her overall position as a woman writer in early twentieth-century Spain. There is freedom, freedom to try love, walk away from it if it does not work, or decide to not even bother with finding it with a man. What matters is feeling secure and confident with one's self. I believe that Burgos and other women writers in early twentieth-century Spain understood this idea and utilized it as fuel for battling the obstacles society constructed for them: substandard education for their sex, lack of respect from literary scholars, rigid societal expectations, and the "scientific" data that categorized them as inferior.

To quote John Donne, "No man is an island." No woman is one, either. Yet the resiliency of the self and what an individual can accomplish on his or her own is one of the most marvelous aspects of the human experience. Carmen de Burgos captures this struggle in her novellas. It makes the world a little less scary, knowing that while we all

probably seek love with another, we have our own personal self-esteem: a kind of security net to catch us when “reality” arrives, and the love which we thought was in reach, fails.

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